the ROHMER REVIEW

No. 4

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This issue marks the appearance of two new associate editors, David Braveman and Chris Steinbrunner. Chris is replacing Tom Hammond, who has resigned from the editorial staff, as media editor. This issue also is the last to be produced by Douglas Rossman, who is relinquishing his role of editor-publisher to Robert Briney.

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ROHMER

by J. C. Squire

A year or two ago I drew, or attempted to draw, attention to the peculiar qualities of Mr. Sax Rohmer. Only in a casual and parenthetical way, however, for I was ostensibly writing about something else. A holiday, during which my brain has required and received rest, has brought me back to him. I unfortunately left at home half-read--if this personal interpolation may be pardoned--his latest work. I saw enough of it to be relieved of my fear, engendered by the last I had read (THE ORCHARD OF TEARS), that Mr. Rohmer was going to desert his natural province and attempt to emulate Miss Corelli, an operation for which he is not designed. But the advantage of liking a really popular author like Mr. Rohmer is that one can find his books, in cheap editions, on even the most Philistine of railway bookstalls, where Chesterton, Richard Jefferies, and even Dickens are names at which the clerk gapes in bewilderment or boredom. I had therefore no difficulty, at various stopping-places, in furnishing myself with the old familiar friends, THE MYSTERY OF DR. FU-MANCHU, THE YELLOW CLAW, TALES OF SECRET EGYPT, THE DEVIL DOCTOR, and THE SI-FAN MYSTERIES. This last I am now reading. How, I wonder again, can any man with a taste for the nightmarish and phantasmagorial, and the desire of an occasional escape from the necessity of exerting his own intellect, deny that Mr. Rohmer is as competent a merchant of shocks as exists?

THE SI-FAN MYSTERIES is good all through. It even does what all good shockers do when their villains are too good to waste, disposes of its villain in such a manner that, although presumably dead, he may well turn up again--like Sherlock Holmes. It begins in a London hotel, where a diplomat, worn to a shadow by a horrible secret, lies dying. It ends in a cave of the sea with pursuers hot on the heels of pursued, the lot frustrated, the last diabolical

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weapon foiled. Between this beginning and this end we have met the Man with the Limp and the deadly Flower of Silence. We have spent agitated hours in the Chinatown joy-shop, watched burglaries and poisonings, chased cabs, and heard strange knockings. We have learned the secret of the Golden Pomegranates and waited while Sir Baldwin Frazer operated, under compulsion, on Fu-Manchu's brain. We have rushed from the empty little house by the Baldwin, to the house at Wadsworth, the café in Soho, the Room with a Golden Door, and the dungeons of Greywater Park. No ingenuity, no method of transport, and no adjective has been spared. And if we notice, we notice with gratitude and a compliment, that almost the whole of the book's long action has been conducted at night, or, failing night, in thick fog.

There are, to put it politely, distinct flaws in Mr. Rohmer's style. His sentences are often so spasmodic, his words so repetitive, that one sometimes suspects him of dictation. In several of his books, including THE SI-FAN MYSTERIES, there is a character named Nayland-Smith. His status is odd: he appears to be a Burmese civil servant who gets, whenever Mr. Rohmer wants him, indefinite leave from some undefined authority in order to tackle problems that are a little abstruse for Scotland Yard. He is tall, lean, long of jaw; he has a habit, on almost every page, of either "loading" his pipe or letting fall the match with which he is about to light it. A careful artist would not repeat these things so often as Mr. Rohmer does; even the most patient reader is apt sometimes to wish that, for once, Nayland-Smith would break the monotony by employing, on the one hand, a cigar or a cigarette, or, on the other, a patent lighter. Nayland-Smith's mode of expressing himself is as little varied as his "business with hands and pipe." I extract a few specimens from pp. 122-123 of THE SI-FAN MYSTERIES:

"Take my hand," he snapped energetically.

"Sit tight and catch," rapped Smith.

"Come on, Weymouth!" rapped Nayland-Smith.

"You don't have to," snapped Smith.

Very seldom indeed does Nayland-Smith say, cry, continue, resume, observe, rejoin, remark, reply, or

interject. I find him occasionally muttering or jerking, but the immense majority of his sentences are either rapped or snapped. This, quite apart from the fact that it might well have put his companions off their game, becomes so irritating that the reader would welcome anything, anything, for a change--even the "he husked" and "he hoarsed" of Mr. Leacock's celebrated burlesque.

Here are some of Mr. Rohmer's defects; I suppose I had better add, though I personally am corrupt enough to delight in them, the truly terrible words that he invents. In one of his books, all the well-known shuddery words having been worn to rags, he finds it necessary, in order to get one more thrill out of the exhausted nerves, to begin describing things as "beetlesque." His shadows are "cloisteresque," his music is "luresome," and the trackers on the roof of the Café de l'Egypte look down on "the teemful streets of Soho." But what of that? Words are Mr. Rohmer's slaves, not his masters. He uses them as a great painter uses his colours; he is bound by no conventions, but thinks only of the effects at which he is aiming. And he achieves them. There are many writers of cheap shockers as reckless of English, as untrammelled by considerations of "verisimilitude," as resolved to get six thrills to the page, as debonair in the constant use of old materials which themselves or others have found satisfactory, as Mr. Rohmer. We know elsewhere--oh! how plentifully elsewhere--these mysterious Chinese, these Oriental brass boxes, these opium dens--hells, I should say--these wharves by the foggy Thames, these police boats and floating corpses, these palatial hotels (I should say khans or caravanserais) with their suave managers, these underground tunnels, these furtive servants, these rope-ladders and blow-pipes, these rooms in the Temple, these boomings of Big Ben at midnight. We know, how well, that distraught girl in the rain with the black scarf over her head and that other hussy, dark-eyed, with the voluptuous lips and the snake bangle, who is "probably a Eurasian." But when we meet them in Mr. Rohmer they have an extra touch of vividness that they lack elsewhere. It is he, and not his rivals, who has left permanently impressed on my

imagination the picture of a man shamming sleep in an opium den whilst the local siren, with death in her hands, lifts his eyelids to test him; the picture of a bony yellow arm thrust into the moonlight in a high room. And, to do him justice, he has not left the shocker-maker's cabinet of properties where he found it. The Chinese scientific genius who kidnaps illustrious English doctors, hypnotises them and makes them work for the dominance of the Yellow Race is, I think, a novel conception. The wholesale importation of Oriental spiders, scorpions, and snakes into an English baronet's premises has not, I believe, been done before. And some of Dr. Fu-Manchu's scientific inventions are indisputably new, notably that memorable cross between a fungus and a microbe, used in that case where the fungus fell like dust on the explorers and instanteously began to spread cankerously over all their flesh. I could give others, only one should not queer the pitch. But I have said enough, I hope, to indicate that Mr. Rohmer--though his morals are uniformly as sound as those of all melodramatists--has as vivid and unwholesome an imagination, as fecund a spring of morbid invention, as any writer in the cheap series or out of them. Of course, if one examines his plots and his machinery with the cold eye of a scientific investigator one will very probably arrive at the conclusion that all would not have happened just as he says it does, that his characters would not in all cases have behaved as he makes them, and, particularly, that the idiocies committed in these, as in all mystery books, by the paladins fighting on the side of the angels, in order to give the villains a good run, might in most cases have been avoided. But readers who examine the art of the fabulist in this manner should avoid Mr. Rohmer. He is not for the pedant. He is for those who can fall under his spell sufficiently to believe whatever he says. Of that company I am one.

The book is open before me. The last sentences on the page catch my eye. The trapdoor is softly closed. The men stand over the panes of the skylight:

"Look," he said, "there is the house of hashish"--

I shall stop writing this, and go on from there.

THE ROMANCE OF THE MIDDLE EAST

by John E. Carroll

"Drifting sands and a caravan,
the desert's endless space,
Lustrous eyes 'neath eastern skies,
and a woman's veiled face."
Yolande Langworthy

This beautiful bit of poetic fantasy, and gems such as Bayard Taylor's "Bedouin Song," did much to convey the spirit of romance of the Arab world so prevalent in many of the novels of Sax Rohmer.

Sax Rohmer's great fascination with the Middle East, especially with Egypt, brought him to the Land of the Pharaohs, whose terrain--except for fertile areas bordering the Nile and in the Fayyum--is a series of large and minor deserts, part of that vast sea of sand, the mighty Sahara, which covers approximately one-quarter of the continent of Africa.

Since no two individuals receive the same impression upon viewing this panorama, it is, therefore, of prime importance to want to be there; for when one considers the difference between the green fields of England and the barren wastes of North Africa, the contrast is no less than startling. Nevertheless, Sax Rohmer found this land so interesting that his books contain many episodes relating to his personal impressions of things he saw, heard, and felt.

The chapter in which Sime and young Cairn observe the passing throng from their hotel's terrace in BROOD OF THE WITCH-QUEEN[1] describes a scene often witnessed by many travellers resting from their exertions or merely taking their ease before the sun's fierce heat begins to beat down. However, after the Adan or noon-prayer, from about one in the afternoon until 5 p.m., the temperature reaches fantastic heights; and the inhabitants retreat into the shelter of their rooms or houses in a four-hour lull.

The heat becomes most oppressive and, in the desert areas, almost unbearable with respiration

[1]Pyramid edition, p. 73.

extremely difficult. Sax Rohmer's description of the physical hardships which were occasioned in the ascent to and the descent from the King's Chamber in the Pyramid of Méydûm in the aforementioned book[2] might quite accurately describe those endured in the desert.

Yet, in spite of all these discomforts, for the interested traveller there is an intriguing series of cities of the sort to conjure up visions of Arabian Nights, from Casablanca in the west, eastward through Rabat, Fez, Meknes, Marrakech, etc., many of which have high walls and vast gateways overlaid with colored tiles bearing Arabic inscriptions. These desert cities have their camel markets outside the city and caravansaries with walled courts and groves of date palms. The movement along the roads--with its camels, men astride diminutive asses, veiled riders mounted on horses, and others simply walking, the women always a pace or two behind their lords--is reminiscent of Biblical times; for the East moves but slowly.

Refreshments may be had at the tabak which serves tea or strong, syrupy Turkish coffee after the custom of the Greek Καφενίον or coffeehouse. Some towns have cafés boasting a dancing girl, a favorite such as Zarmi in the Fu-Manchu stories; but it is in the cities along the North African Littoral that one finds more sophisticated places of entertainment with belly dancers and "native quarters."

Away from the desert strongholds, the dirt roads are often bordered with giant cacti and century plants whose lower leaves are often ten feet in height; some plants send up one or two stalks resembling giant asparagus spears of telephone-pole size. Water is precious here and has to be drawn from wells and stored in waterskins for travel or in earthenware kullans whose porosity converts tepid and unpalatable water, overnight, into cool water for drinking.

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[2]BROOD OF THE WITCH-QUEEN, Pyramid edition, pp. 119-123. Called the "False Pyramid," this unfinished structure in three stages was attributed to the Pharaoh Sneferu. The adjacent mastabas yielded the famous statue of Rahotep and Nofret, rarely omitted from photo collections of Egyptian art.

At rivers or where a well has been enlarged into a fissure, a shaddûf[3] is often used to raise the water. Some waterpoints consist merely of three or four palms surrounding a small pool of dark, brackish water.

One peculiarity of the Sahara is the whirlwinds which begin when the sun is at its zenith and which envelop encampments and dwellings in clouds of gritty sand. The Khamsîn,[4] a violent desert sandstorm, occurs in the spring, and the visibility is so limited throughout its duration that the unfortunate wayfarer can best endure it by crouching down on the ground with the hood of his burnoose flung up over his head to exclude the wind-driven sand. After it is all past, he can be found extricating himself from a mound of sand which formed itself about him to a height of two feet or more.

Desert travel is a hard way of life; and one has only to look into the faces of these desert dwellers to read the truth in these lines of Yolande Langworthy's poem:

> "The soul of man to the desert came
> to grapple its chance with fate."

Here is all of the faith, stoicism, and fatalism of the Arab, qualities with which Sax Rohmer endowed Hassan es-Sugra[5] and several other Moslem characters of his creation.

A most fascinating sight to behold is the blue and purple shadows cast below the ridges of the Atlas Mountains by the setting sun as viewed from the edge of the Sahara, followed by a nocturne of stars set in blue-black velvet. At the foothills of this range, and before the drifting sands are encountered, are dry mud-flats; these give way, in turn, to vast areas covered with small hummocks bearing sage plants on which, before the sun rises, are snails! A type of small but swiftly moving

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[3]SHE WHO SLEEPS, McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie edition, pp. 239.

[4]BROOD OF THE WITCH-QUEEN, Pyramid edition, pp. 81-90.

[5]SHE WHO SLEEPS, McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie edition, pp. 92-93.

lizard abounds there and also an occasional 'agrab or scorpion.

Because they assuage thirst, watermelons are greatly esteemed in this area of water scarcity. Discarded rinds attract hordes of giant beetles which seem to materialize from nowhere as they descend upon this feast. They are of a species of dung beetle having a glistening, japanned-black body, fully two and three-quarters inches in length, two and one-quarter inches in width, and one inch in thickness, irrespective of its legs--an enormous creature. Their adult size approximates the scarabs of stone or faience which were laid between the wrappings of a mummy in the heart area. In jewelry and seals the dimensions of these reproductions were scaled down for delicacy.

Contemporary with the novels of Sax Rohmer, a considerable amount of European influence existed in the coastal cities of Casablanca, Tangier, Oran, Algiers, Tunis, Tripoli, Alexandria, and Port Saïd, and extended to Cairo on the Nile and beyond. The French influence predominated; and numerous French words, incorporated into the many dialects of Arabic, bear testimony to this fact. Moreover, in passing through the countryside of Morocoo, Algeria, Tunisia, etc., on the Chemin de Fer Algerien, the C. F. Morocain et al., the railroad stations might be those of rural France. The famous Légion Étranger, the French Foreign Legion, often the subject of many romantic novels and motion pictures, had its headquarters in Sidi Bel Abbes. Since then, political upheavals in the past two decades have decimated the ranks of French nationals, but mementos of their sway remain behind.

The predecessors of the French are also well-represented by Hannibal's Aqueduct to ancient Carthage outside of modern Tunis, by the Great Mosque of Kairouan (Tunisia), Moslem holy city second only to Mecca; and by the mosques of Sultan Hassan and Mohammed Ali in Cairo, to name a few sights. The Citadel, built by Saladin is also very inspiring.

However, it is ancient Egypt the mysterious, the land of Al Khem, rather than modern Egypt, the United Arab Republic, which seems to cast its spell

on the sightseer, a land likened by Sax Rohmer to the deep notes of an organ.[6]

At one time the tour to the Pyramids and Sphinx was made by camel or donkey; today, a motor coach or private car performs this function for the tourist. The sand which once covered these structures has been painstakingly cleared away over many years to reveal the Sphinx in its entirety and several mastabas about the bases of the pyramids of Cheops, Kephren, and Mycerinos in addition to, of recent date, the discovery of three enormous solar barks and the pits containing them.

Most of the Rohmerian material was written at a time when the wealthy and persons in comfortable circumstances were accustomed to holiday in Luxor from which western Thebes, Der el Bahri, Medinet Habu, Valley of the Kings, and Karnak were accessible, the latter being reached by horse-drawn "arabiyeh."[7] Today, the United Arab Airlines carries a great deal of the traffic between Cairo and Luxor; and the Nile steamers, from Aswan to Abu Simbel. However, whatever positions the "Memphis," "Nefertari," and other Nile steamers held in relation to the High Dam at Aswan, i.e., above or below the dam, must be maintained thereafter.

The Khan Khalil Bazaars of Cairo and the shops of other towns and cities of the Middle East are a welcome diversion from sightseeing in desolate expanses and carry an array of merchandise ranging from ornately tooled and decorated leathergoods; daggers and swords with marvelously etched and enamelled blades and hilts; various items of copper and brass of strange appearance to western eyes; rugs and folk-weave clothing in the natural black, brown, rust, and white of the animal fibers; and finally to jewelry representing the finest examples of the lapidary's arts, as well as gold and silver wire beaten into fine filigree work, a craft of the Arab world.

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[6]SHE WHO SLEEPS, McKinlay, Stone & Mackenzie edition, p. 6.

[7]BROOD OF THE WITCH-QUEEN, Pyramid edition, pp. 87-88.

A thousand impressions may register in one's memory as he passes along the streets and byways of the more populous areas. A striking sight to behold is that of a tall, bearded, beturbaned Arab, a sheikh or man of considerable wealth and influence, his creamy-white wool burnoose about his powerful shoulders, a beautifully wrought silver dagger tucked in his sash; his feet shod in soft, red leather boots having the customary pointed, turned-up toes.

Another street scene occurs at certain times of the day when automobiles are seen to stop, their drivers alighting to cast prayer-rugs in the street before their cars as they salaam to the muezzin's cry of "La illaha illa allah . . . Allahu Akbar!"

In the market places and in the shade of buildings on small, mean streets, ragged, wretched beggars plead for "bakhshîsh;" and above all, the air is pervaded with the aroma of cooking rice and lamb or goat amply reinforced with garlic. In the perfumers, the atmosphere is redolent with the scent of musk; and in other places, one comes unexpectedly upon the heavy smell of incense and strong Turkish tobacco from the hookah or nargalet in native establishments. Although one may lack the awareness to immediately identify it upon his first experience, it is the smell of the East and Middle East.

Other personalities encountered in the Middle East are the official, soldier and policeman, easily recognizable by variations in the styling of a tropical uniform and headgear consisting of a kepi, fez, or tarboush--a kind of Bimbâshi Barûk; and among the nightclub entertainers, one finds the counterparts of Kâramanèh of Fu-Manchu fame and Musette of WHITE VELVET.

Whatever this magic of the Middle East is can be put down to the discovery of something that, although different, is yet enjoyable and worth remembering long after it is experienced--something for which one must have a feeling in order to appreciate it.

HOUDINI TO THE RESCUE

by John Harwood

There are two schools of mystery writers[1] with regard to the methods used to create their stories. The proponents of one school believe in outlining the complete plot from the presentation of the problem to its final solution. Those who belong to the other school think that the writer should work out the plot as he goes along, being as mystified as the reader when the body is discovered and almost as surprised at the solution of the crime. Some authors who follow this method may have a vague idea of the plot but not have all of the details resolved in their minds. As they go along new situations arise and the story seems to write itself until the finished product no longer resembles the author's original idea.

Advocates of each school consider their way the best. The outline author believes that without careful advance plotting the story will wind up with many loose ends. For instance, if he knows the final outcome beforehand, he can plant clues as he goes along. On the other hand, an author of the non-outline school reasons that working with a detailed outline will tie him down and cause him to reject all new ideas because they might disrupt the plot.

Sax Rohmer was one author who had belonged to the non-outline school but after an unfortunate and harrowing experience switched to the ranks of those writers who work out the course of the story beforehand. Rohmer referred to this turning point in a 1931 interview:

> "I used to think that the proper way to write a mystery story was to create a situation as perplexing to the writer as to the reader. It was my idea that I should not know the answer to the puzzle when I started but should work my way to the solution just as the reader would.

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[1]Actually Sax Rohmer didn't write mystery stories in the strictest sense of the word. "Thriller," "crime stories," or "suspense stories" might be more appropriate designations.

"One experience, however, was sufficient to convince me that the whole plot, its unfoldment and solution, must be completely predetermined. Since then I have always prepared a scenario for all my stories."[2]

The event in question occurred relatively early in Rohmer's career when he was writing the Paul Harley novel FIRE-TONGUE for Collier's Weekly (12 installments, 25 December 1920-12 March 1921). Rohmer had been writing stories for Collier's for several years and they were very popular with the readers. Up to this time he had done most of his writing in England. However, when he was about one-third of the way through the story, he received a cablegram from the magazine stating that he was only one installment ahead of the printer, and that the editor wanted Rohmer to come to New York so there would be no delay in getting the installments to the printer as they were completed. Rohmer was behind in the story because he had started it with no idea of how it was going to conclude. He kept creating new situations which were interesting to the readers but only got Rohmer more deeply entangled. Not only that, but the whole undertaking, with the copy boys standing by to snatch the pages of the manuscript as they were finished and rush off with them to the printer, made things all the worse. This created a tension that didn't help with his writing and slowed him up even more.

During this time Rohmer's friend Harry Houdini, the magician and escape artist, was visiting him and worrying about the story almost as much as its writer.

[2]Carl Warton, "Houdini Saved the Day for Sax Rohmer," Boston Sunday Herald, 8 March 1931. H. Allen Smith (Chicago Tribune Book World, 21 April 1968, p. 6) related being given a similar statement by Rohmer. Although Smith had misplaced his notes of the interview, which had taken place in the Thirties, he recalled that Rohmer had said something to the effect that "I used to start off without an inkling of who committed the crime. But no more. I'll never follow that bloody procedure agayne."

The affair had reached the point where there were only four more installments to be published and Rohmer was no nearer to the solution than when he had first started writing. Suddenly Houdini jumped to his feet and cried out that he had the answer to the whole problem. When Rohmer asked what it was, Houdini explained that if the writer used the flashback method he could include all the facts required to conclude the adventure.

Rohmer proceeded to write about an event that had happened years before the story started. In this part of the story Nicol Brinn related his visit to the City of Fire in a remote fastness of northern India. He had obtained information about the hidden headquarters of a secret society of fire worshippers and wanted to see it for himself. Brinn managed to make his way into the city but was trapped there. He escaped by joining the organization and receiving the tattoo of membership which allowed him to pass through the gates of the city. Since his initiation had not been a formal one, Brinn escaped the notice of the society for seven years until his membership was accidentally revealed to Fire-Tongue, the head of the cult. This led to a series of events that culminated in the destruction of the society and the death of Fire-Tongue.

This flashback, inserted near the end of the story, provided the background needed to bring the tale to a logical conclusion, and Rohmer was able to meet his deadline. In this way Houdini, the escape artist, enabled his friend, the writer, to escape from a literary trap.

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A reminder that items in the following areas should be sent directly to the Editor or the appropriate Associate Editor:

General Articles, Bibliography, Artwork--Robert E. Briney, 233 Lafayette St., Apt. #2, Salem, Massachusetts 01970.

Current Events, Newsnotes--Andrew Jay Peck, 2968 Perry Ave., Bronx, New York 10458.

Movies, TV, Radio--Chris Steinbrunner, c/o WOR-TV, 1440 Broadway, New York, N. Y. 10018.

ZAGAZIG

by Jeffrey N. Weiss

All Rohmer enthusiasts are probably familiar with the code used by Dr. Fu Manchu in THE HAND OF FU-MANCHU, which was based on the name of "a very unsavory Arab town in Lower Egypt." I have never liked taking things for granted, so I accepted Dr. Petrie's invitation[1] to try my hand at deciphering the cryptograms found in the chapter entitled "Zagazig" and "The Second Message." After having spent some time on this endeavor, I have come to the conclusion that "Zagazig" is not a code but just a jumbled array of punctuation marks. I justify this conclusion by referring the reader to the following charts.

First Message

Z,--a--°g°--a;--z:--I--g,z,--a,--g°--a,z;--I;--g:--z°
S m i t h / p a s s i n /T h r

a°g°A--z;i--:g;--Z,--a;--g°a°z°i;--G;--z--,a°g--:a°
e e / C o l /S t r e e t /t w e l v

--z°I;--g:--z°--a°g;--a--:Z--,i°g:z,a°g,--a:z,i--:g°
e/t h i r t y/ W e d n e s d a y .

Second Message

Z,--a--°g°--a;--z:--I:--g;z°--a,g;--A--,z;i--:
S m i t h /g o i n g / J o y

G,--z:--a;g--A,z--i;--g°z°A;g,a°Z--°i;g,z:a,g--:azig°
/S h o /a f t e/o n e/ M o n d a y .

English

Letter	First Message	Second Message
a	Comma after italicized letter (passing)	Comma after regular letter (after, Monday)

Discrepancy--An italicized letter changes the meaning of the punctuation mark following it.

b	None	None
c	Semicolon after italicized letter (Colt)	None
d	Colon after regular letter (twice in Wednesday)	Same (Monday)

[1] Pyramid edition, p. 98.

English Letter	First Message	Second Message
e	Dot following regular letter (Three, Street, twelve, Wednesday)	Dot following regular letter (one) Dot following italicized letter (after)
Discrepancy--		An italicized letter changes the meaning of the punctuation mark following it.
f	None	Colon after italicized letter (after)
g	The "g" in "passing" is missing.	Semicolon after italicized letter (first "g" in "going.") Semicolon after regular letter (second "g" in "going.")
Discrepancy--		An italicized letter changes the meaning of the punctuation mark following it.
h	Colon after regular letter (Smith, Three, thirty)	Same (Smith, Shop)
i	Dot after regular letter (Smith) Comma after italicized letter (passing)	Dot after regular letter (Smith, going)
j	None	Comma before italicized letter (Joy)
k	None	None
l	Semicolon after italicized letter (Colt) Colon before italicized letter (twelve)	None
m	Dot before regular letter (Smith)	Same (Smith)
n	Semicolon after regular letter (passing) Comma after italicized letter (Wednesday)	Comma after regular letter (going) Comma after italicized letter (one, Monday)

English Letter	First Message	Second Message
Discrepancy--		An italicized letter changes the meaning of the punctuation mark following it.
Discrepancy--It is not good form to write a rather infrequently used letter such as "n" three different ways.		
o	Colon before italicized letter (Colt)	Semicolon after italicized letter (going, Joy, Shop, Monday) Comma after italicized letter (one)
Discrepancy-- It is highly improbable that anyone could have broken this code due to the fact that a comparatively frequently used letter, such as "o", is written three different but very similar ways.		
p	Comma after italicized letter (passing)	The "p" is missing in "Shop."
q	None	None
r	Dot after italicized letter (Street, thirty)	The "r" is missing in "after."
s	Comma after regular letter (Smith, Street) Comma after italicized letter (passing, Wednesday) Dot after italicized letter (second "s" in "passing")	Comma after regular letter (Smith, Shop)
Discrepancy--An italicized letter changes the meaning of the punctuation mark following it.		
Discrepancy--Acknowledging the fact that there are two completely different ways of writing the letter "s" (using regular letters or using italicized letters--dot method) it is very unusual to write it still another way (using a comma after an italicized letter). Writing it this third way caused the		

English Letter	First Message	Second Message
t	Semicolon after italicized letter (Smith, Street, thirty--second "t") Semicolon after regular letter (Three, thirty--first "t") "t" is missing in "Colt."	Semicolon after italized letter (Smith) Dot after italicized letter (after)
u	None	None
v	Dot after italicized letter (twelve)	None
w	Comma before regular letter (twelve, Wednesday)	None
x	None	None
y	None	Colon before regular letter (Joy)
z	None	None

After deciphering the individual punctuation marks, I grouped the symbols together, with the following results:

Symbol	First Message	Second Message
Comma after italicized letter	s,a,i,n, p	n,o
Semicolon after italicized letter	c,l,t	g,o,t
Colon after regular letter	d,h	d,h
Dot after regular letter	e,i	e,i
Colon before italicized letter	l,o	---
Dot before regular letter	m	---
Semicolon after regular letter	n,t	g
Comma after italicized letter	n,p,s	---
Dot after italicized letter	r,s,v	e,t
Comma before regular letter	w	---
Colon after italicized letter	f	---

Webster defines a code as "a system of words or other symbols arbitrarily used to represent words." It is apparent that "Zagazig" can no longer be termed

a code, for there is no systematic arrangement of symbols to represent letters. This is proven by the fact that all the symbols, except those representing the letters m, w, and f, had more than one meaning.

* * *

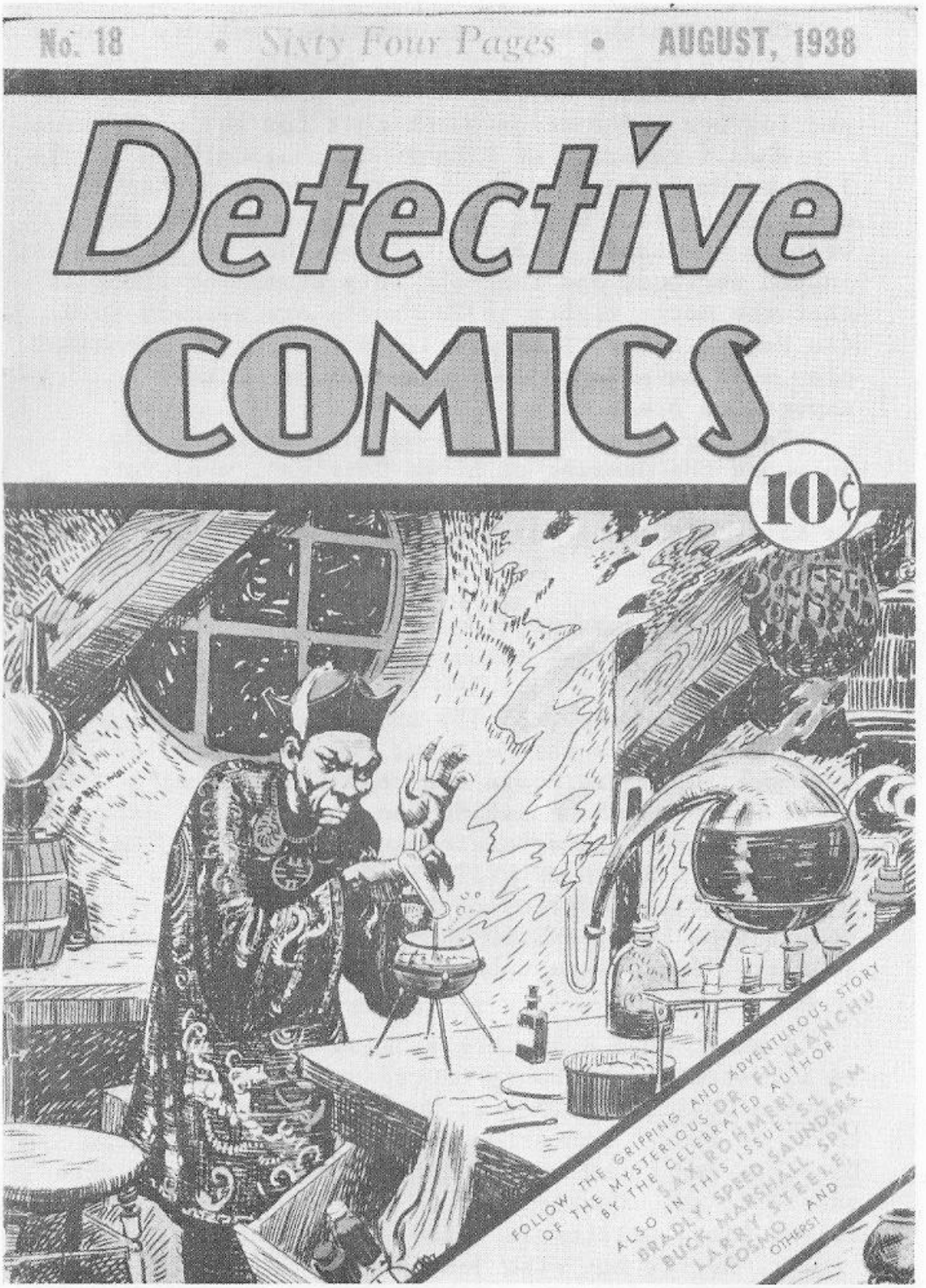
FLEET STREET REPORT

by Andrew Jay Peck

"Born of the highly imaginative pen of Sax Rohmer, the fiendish Fu Manchu is probably the most popular villain in modern English literature." We have ample proof of this in the form of the many news notes for this issue, not the least of which is the article from which this quotation comes. The article, entitled "Master of Menace," is a six-page spread, complete with seven photographs, which appeared in the October 1969 issue of MD, the medical newsmagazine. The article is an excellent biography of Rohmer and our favorite fiend, especially when you realize that Rohmer "was unusually reticent for an author" (to quote the article), rarely gave interviews, and therefore little is known about him, and especially little about his early life (his date and place of birth are not definitely known). Copies of the magazine can be obtained for $1.50 from MD Publications, Inc., 30 East 60th Street, New York, N. Y. 10022. Fu Manchu is also mentioned in an earlier issue of MD (March 1966) in an article by Dr. Félix Martí-Ibáñez (who is the editor of MD, and also a Sax Rohmer Society member) entitled "The Cosmic Saboteur--A Meditation on Crime." That issue of MD was devoted to "Criminology and Medicine," and is well worth reading (available for $1.00 from MD Publications).

* * *

The French film magazine midi-minuit Fantastique #14 (June 1966) contains synopses of all the Fu Manchu movies and pictures from most, if not all, of them. It also contains an article about Sax Rohmer and excerpts from early French Fu Manchu comic strips. Copies can still be obtained from Editions le Terrain Vague, 14-16 Rue de Verneuil, Paris 7e, France, for 15 francs ($2.70) including postage. Please note that textual material is in French.


No. 18 • Sixty Four Pages • AUGUST, 1938
Detective
COMICS
10¢
FOLLOW THE GRIPPING AND ADVENTUROUS STORY OF THE MYSTERIOUS DR. FU MANCHU BY THE CELEBRATED AUTHOR SAX ROHMER!
ALSO IN THIS ISSUE—SLAM BRADLEY, SPEED SAUNDERS, BUCK MARSHALL, SPY, LARRY STEELE, COSMO AND OTHERS!

Jim Jones provided a photograph of this cover which apparently marked the first American comic book appearance of Fu Manchu (Story: THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU).

Chris Steinbrunner, our new media editor, reports an article from the Daily News, stating that a Fu Manchu television series is being planned. I hope to get further information about this for our next issue.

When I reported on "The Fu Manchusical" in TRR#3, I must admit that I did not really believe that a musical about Fu would be produced, but I may be wrong. "Reliable sources" tell me that Mr. Bensen is indeed serious, and that the only stumbling block is that the movie rights to Fu Manchu are already sold (to Hammer Films, I believe), and nowadays a Broadway play must be able to sell the movie rights if it expects to break even.

Talking about Fu in the movies, we regret to announce the passing of Lloyd Corrigan, who wrote, directed, and appeared (as Dr. Petrie?) in two of the Fu films with Anna May Wong.

* * *

Sax Rohmer was mentioned twice in Allen Hubin's "Criminals at Large" column in the New York Times. The first time (15 June 1969) was in a review of THE SINO-VARIANT (McKay, $5.95) by Allison Ind, which Mr. Hubin compared to the Fu saga; the second was on 14 December, when Mr. Hubin reported that Rohmer's "The White Hat," which he called "an unexpectedly detectival offering," was reprinted in ALFRED HITCHCOCK PRESENTS: A MONTH OF MYSTERY (Random, $6.95).

A paperback edition of Rohmer's scarce, and only, non-fiction book, THE ROMANCE OF SORCERY (Paperback Library, 95¢), has just been published.

* * *

A short poem about Morris Klaw by Robert Hahn (with an illustration by Henry Lauritzen) appeared in The Pontine Dossier, Volume 2, Number 4. This is the third or fourth Rohmerian article to appear in the Dossier, and those who have not previously subscribed should do so. Contact Luther Norris, 3844 Watseka Ave., Culver City, California 90230.

Mr. Norris has also just published Roy Hunt's FU MANCHU AND COMPANY, a folio containing thirteen portraits of characters from the Rohmer canon. In

addition to the beautiful illustrations (which are black-and-white reproductions of Mr. Hunt's original oil paintings), the folio contains the artist's nostalgic and explanatory comments about each picture, as well as a thoughtful introduction by Irving L. Jaffee. The folio was "respectfully dedicated to the Sax Rohmer Society," a fact for which we are both grateful and proud. Order your copy today!

* * *

Joe Namath got Fu into print again, even if the facts were a little confused: "Off the field, Joe grew the most profitable moustache since Fu Manchu. Fu lost his ball game to the redoubtable Mr. Naismith (sic), but Joe got $10,000 for a close shave commercial." That appeared in the 9 September issue of Look, and despite my letter-to-the-editor, Sir Denis remains "Mr. Naismith" to Look readers.

* * *

In the Baker Street Journal, Volume 5, Number 3, "Baker Street Inventory" lists an article by P. G. Wodehouse, "Onwards and Upwards with the Fiends," as having appeared in the 16 February 1955 issue of Punch. The article is called "A not unjustifiable analysis of Prof. Moriarty as the inferior of Fu Manchu among Fiends in Human Shape."

* * *

In order to give recognition to those members who have made significant contributions to the cause for which The Sax Rohmer Society was founded (but not restricted to activities within the society), we have instituted an investiture system similar to that adopted by the Baker Street Irregulars. Selections were made by a three-man committee of the Review's editorial board, and handsome investiture cards (donated by Luther Norris) have been sent to the investees. Additional investitures will be awarded annually.

Joseph G. Amedeo	-- "Caspar"
Ronald M. Bennett	-- "Sir Provost Hope"
David Braveman	-- "Rev. J. D. Eltham"

Robert E. Briney	--	"Abû Tabâh"
John E. Carroll	--	"Sir Lionel Barton"
John Robert Colombo	--	"Nicol Brinn"
A. F. Germeshausen	--	"Capt. the Hon. Bernard O'Hagan"
Tom Hammond	--	"Ki-Ming"
John Harwood	--	"Gaston Max"
Roy V. Hunt	--	"Daniel 'Red' Kerry"
Jim Jones	--	"Sheikh Ismail"
Félix Martí-Ibáñez	--	"Jack Addison"
Luther Norris	--	"Moris Klaw"
Andrew Jay Peck	--	"John Weymouth"
Douglas A. Rossman	--	"Dr. Bruce Cairn"
James Wade	--	"Bart Kerrigan"

* * *

LETTERS TO LIMEHOUSE

Wherein appear excerpts the Editor believes will be of interest to SRS members generally.

From John E. Carroll, Baltimore, Maryland:

Considering what a truly wonderful job the Walt Disney organization did on Verne's "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," I continue to visualize what could be done with "The Day the World Ended." While this is rated as a science-fiction novel by today's standards, in 1929 when it was sponsored and presented on pioneer radio by Collier's magazine, the listener had the feeling of a supernatural story. In fact, it is my opinion that, if the vampire bit were concentrated upon to set the mood of the audience, the result would be a superior one, leaving the audience with a feeling of having been entertained by both the supernatural and science-fiction elements of this story.

It would not require too much imagination to cast a mental picture of the levitation of the bat-like flying suits over the cemetary as the Walt Disney special effects section would do it. Also, they are noted for the "family type" motion picture, past masters of filming outdoor scenery of the Black Forest and in recreating Felsenweir as an authentic looking schloss from medieval times.

A cliche of today--tell it like it is--would certainly apply in this case; and with the same sort of direction, I cannot see how they could avoid having a real money-maker.

* * *

From John Harwood, New Bedford, Massachusetts:

There is a question in my mind about the date of the first adventures of Nayland Smith and Dr. Petrie with Fu Manchu. David Braveman in his "Good Old Petrie" says that this date should be 1912 and most of the dates of the events should be the year previous to book publication. Mention is made in THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU in reference to the time of year (". . . the intense heat having driven most of the residents out of town . . ."). This would point to the Summer and as the first adventure ("The Zayat Kiss") appeared in the February 15, 1913, issue of Collier's, it couldn't have taken place in 1913. This sounds logical so we can assume that Dr. Petrie first met Fu Manchu in 1912.

However, Sax Rohmer himself states that this adventure took place in 1913. Was Rohmer as confused by dates as Edgar Rice Burroughs was when he wrote the Tarzan books?

On page 137 of THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU we read of Smith and Petrie finding the bodies of Sir Lionel Barton's secretary, Strozza, and his servant, Kwee. On page 68 of THE DAUGHTER OF FU MANCHU mention is made of the death of Kwee late in 1913. The death of Kwee occurred in the story, "The Green Mist," which appeared in Collier's for March 29, 1913. This would seem to indicate that Rohmer is the one who made a mistake in the dating of this adventure. If the magazine version of the story appeared in March of 1913 the adventure couldn't have occurred in late 1913. Probably he didn't keep too accurate an account of the stories he wrote.

References are made in THE RETURN OF DR. FU-MANCHU to the events related in THE INSIDIOUS DR. FU-MANCHU having occurred two years before. This would place the time of RETURN in 1914.

On page 213 of HAND, Dr. Petrie mentions his first meeting with Fu Manchu: "Again I seemed to be

enacting my part in that scene, two years ago and more, when I had burst into the bare room above Shen-Yan's opium den and had stood face to face with Dr. Fu-Manchu." This would seem to put the events in HAND not too long after those in RETURN, or about 1914 or 1915. At the end of the book we read of the shipwreck of the vessel in which Fu Manchu was escaping from England.

In DAUGHTER we read of the raid on the Council of Seven (p. 143) and the death of Fu Manchu (p. 229) in 1917. Here, again, we have Rohmer coming up with dates that don't seem to jibe with the events in the earlier books. How do we explain this?

Now a few more observations on Fu Manchu's mustache. On page 71 of INSIDIOUS we read: "He wore a plain yellow robe, of a hue almost identical with that of his smooth, hairless countenance." On page 256 of the same book we read: "I looked up into his face--his wicked, hairless face." On page 213 of HAND it says: "He wore a plain yellow robe, its hue almost identical with that of his gaunt, hairless face."

This would seem to indicate that the mustache was the invention of the movie makers and not of Sax Rohmer. I haven't finished going through all of the series but I would imagine other references to his face would be the same in the rest of the books.

Another confusion about Fu Manchu's appearance, this time caused by Rohmer, is his hair or the lack of it. Sometimes Rohmer tells us that he has a clean-shaven skull while at others he mentions that he has sparse or scanty neutral-colored hair.

At the time my article on the origin of Fu Manchu appeared in the #2 Review you told me that . . . none of the fans had mentioned their reactions to the possibility that Rohmer may have based his creation of Fu Manchu (in part, at least) on the real-life Hanoi Shan. Have you heard anything since then from any of the readers about this?

Here are a few comments furthering the possibility: You may remember that in my article I said that Hanoi Shan became known as "l'Araignee" (the Spider). On page 125 of INSIDIOUS, Smith comments on Lionel Barton's returning to England where Fu Manchu is waiting for

him. He says "England at present is the web. The spider will be waiting." On page 282 of RETURN, Fu Manchu says "I wait patiently, with my trap set, like the spider for the fly!"

Also, in DAUGHTER and MASK the narrator of the stories is Shan Greville. Would these be references to Hanoi Shan? Of course all this might just be coincidence but it makes you wonder.

* * *

From Luther L. Norris, Culver City, California:

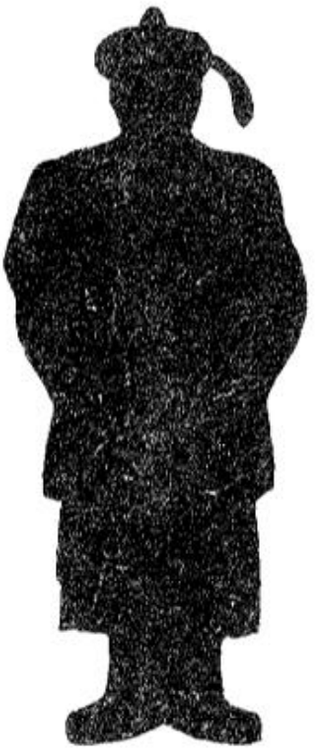
By the way, we are adding Moris Klaw as a companion casting to the one on Fu Manchu. Same size, 12 inches, and price, $20.00, including surface mail from London. Cassin-Scott will be starting on this within the next few days and I'll try to send you a picture of it in the near future. We have used Hunt's portrait of Klaw, plus the one by Lauritzen, plus word descriptions from the stories. It should be one of the most unusual figurines yet!

Oh, I mentioned The Sax Rohmer Society on a telephone interview a couple of nights ago for the Sally Jessy "talk" show, Station WIOD (NBC for Miami). The interview was on Pons but Holmes, Fu Manchu and Count Dracula got into the act before it was over!

* * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * * *

SINITIC SONNET

by James Wade

D evil and doctor, though your foes proclaim
O utrageous maledictions on your schemes ---
C ursing and reviling your mad dreams,
T aking in vain your ancient, honored name ---
O ur sympathies are with you all the same
R egardless of your tortured victims' screams,
F or all your author's dull and dreary reams,
U ntil the world re-echoes with your fame!

M ay every dacoit do his duty plain
A nd every giant fungus find its feast;
N o harm befall your servants, man or beast,
C harged with commands for bringing mankind pain.
H owever sure Smith's triumph at the end,
U ntil that time, consider us your friend!